March is Women's History Month – commemorating and encouraging the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history.

The role of women in the blind community and Lighthouse for the Blind also deserves celebration. We need first and foremost to recognize, Helen Keller as the first American woman who led the way for all blind. Ms. Keller was an American educator who overcame the adversity of being blind and deaf to become one of the 20th century's leading humanitarians, as well as co-founder of the ACLU. In fact, it was Ms. Keller’s visit to Florida in 1942 that helped lay the ground-work for state funding for the blind, which was essential in the founding of numerous blind agencies in Florida including Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches.

Lighthouse’s first executive director was also a woman, Grace Emerson. Ms. Emerson served as the founding executive director from 1946 to 1949. Throughout the Lighthouse’s 75 year history numerous women have played a role in the agencies success, including numerous board members, donors, staff, volunteers and teachers. Today, a woman once again takes the leadership role after 35 years of working at the lighthouse. Mary Allen started her journey in 1986, as a Social Worker. She rose through the organization as a Program Coordinator, Vision Services Director and now the Interim Executive Director.

The world celebrates Women’s History Month to remind ourselves of the accomplishments of women throughout the years and Lighthouse for the Blind is proud to celebrate the women in our organization’s 75 year history as well.
In collaboration with several local agencies serving the blind and visually impaired, many Lighthouse clients and staff were vaccinated on March 11 at the new Lighthouse location.

Judy Bice was the first in line to receive her shot.

COVID - ONE YEAR LATER

March 20, 2020, the day Lighthouse for the Blind closed its doors due to the pandemic. As everyone in America saw the spread of the virus, the economic fall-out and the rising death toll, staff at Lighthouse were no exception. Many took time off, quarantined and waited. Many asked daily, will we be furloughed? When will we be able to come back to work? How will all of this affect us? More importantly, how does this affect our clients?

Within days, those questions were answered.
Not one employee was furloughed. Not one employee got sick. Though assistive technology training was already being taught remotely for many clients, other instructional areas provided primarily in-person training. Daily living skills teachers, youth services, counseling and case management staff immediately began adapting to the new environment. Individual sessions were first taught via Facetime and personal phone calls. And then came ZOOM. ZOOM changed everything, and enabled clients to be brought together for group classes and their usual monthly social gatherings; Youth Program Activities, Boot-Up Club and Book Club.

Daily Living Skills staff reported that changing to remote classes happened so suddenly, that they realized they had to teach things differently. They added a second camera to demonstrate the tasks that they were teaching "close up" such as labeling methods, kitchen safety, and other independent living skills. They created and comprehensive 11-week curriculum to cover all skill areas which. They shared instructional videos, invited guest speakers, showed pictures and provided descriptions of useful aids and appliances.

They also demonstrated many smart phone applications in lessons for color/money identification, optical character readers, talking books, bar code readers, ordering groceries and food delivery.

For many months, the teaching staff questioned, does remote learning work and were the adaptations they made successful? As they continued to teach and began getting positive feedback they realized that the clients were gaining new skills and were enjoying meeting one another on-line. Clients were learning to be more independent and they were becoming more knowledgeable as a result of the staff adapting to a new way of teaching!

But all in all, through all the changes and adjustments, staff wonders how this will affect teaching methods in the future? Guess that remains to be seen.

**A Look Back.......**

An ongoing pictorial flashback from 75 years of service.

**Youth Programs through the years.**

1950's
Sunshine Kindergarten for blind and visually impaired children opened.

1979
The pre-school program becomes a full-time, year-round service, one of the first in Florida.

1990's
Teaching visually impaired youth changed drastically in the 1990's with the invention of computers and technology products.

**Calendar of Events:**

**Friday, March 19 12 pm to 1pm** - Virtual Book Club  
e-mail dsalina@lhpbo.org to register. The book is *No End in Sight: my life as a blind Iditarod racer* by Rachael Scdoris.

**Thursday, March 25 from 1:30 to 2:30** - Virtual Book Club  
e-mail dsalina@lhpbo.org to register. The book is *Daddy's Girl* by Lisa Scottoline.
Saturday, March 27 - Spring Fling Celebration - Lighthouse youth participants are invited to join us for a fun-filled afternoon of games, crafts, an egg hunt and lunch! RSVP REQUIRED to estevens@lhpbo.org.